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## **Refsnider '04 wins the 2011 Tour Divide**

*Summary: Currently a doctorate student in geology, Refsnider finished the bike race in 15 days, 21 hours, and 1 minute.*

(June 30, 2011)-University of Minnesota, Morris alumnus Kurt Refsnider '04 won the 2011 Tour Divide, a 2,745-mile mountain bike race that follows the continental divide from Banff, Canada, to the United States-Mexico border in Antelope Wells, New Mexico. Refsnider began the tour on June 10 and arrived at the finish line on June 26 after an all-night final push. He finished the race in 15 days, 21 hours, and 1 minute.

The Tour Divide is a self-supported mountain bike race. Riders carry all their own gear for camping, repairing their bikes, and navigating. Food and water must be found along the route at whatever stores and restaurants are available. No other outside assistance is allowed, and the clock runs nonstop.

"The course follows primarily dirt roads and forest roads, so virtually all riders opt to use mountain bikes," shares Refsnider. "This year, racers faced deep snow and long slogs over snowed-in passes, as well as flooded roads in the north and record-breaking heat in New Mexico."

Refsnider finished second in the Tour Divide in 2009, his first attempt at the race. "I was more than half a day behind the winner," remembers Refsnider. "This year, the race was a close-fought battle between me and single-speed (only one gear on his bike) racer Jefe Branham of Gunnison, Colorado. We traded leads right from the start, with Branham remaining out in front into Wyoming, until I put in a 370-mile push to pass him. In the end, I beat him by a mere three hours after we each rode through the final night to reach the border." Refsnider averaged 170 miles a day and four hours of sleep per night.

A Morris geology major with a chemistry minor, Refsnider is finishing a doctorate in geology at the University of Colorado, Boulder. He's in his fifth year at the Institute of Arctic and Alpine Research. "My research primarily focuses on understanding the interactions between continental ice sheets and landscape evolution in the Canadian Arctic over the past 2.5 million years, as well as the potential role these interactions may have played on global climate," says Refsnider. "I've spent four to six weeks doing fieldwork on Baffin Island during each of the past four summers. Keith Brugger [Morris professor of geology] joined me for one of those and luckily survived several close calls with hungry polar bears!"

After finishing his dissertation and graduating in December 2011, Refsnider will join the faculty at Prescott College in Prescott, Arizona, in January 2012.

Photo credit: Mike Dion

Photo above: Refsnider at the Banff Tour Divide start site

Photo below: Refsnider pushing through snow during the Tour Divide

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